

# Religions of Asia Fall 2021

(Rel 100: 3 CR. HUM/GA).

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Office hours will be through Zoom: Friday 9-11am, and by appointment. Let me know when you would like to meet and I will send you a Zoom invitation.

## Course Description:

This course offers an introduction to Hinduism, Buddhism, and to lesser extent other religious traditions found throughout Asia. The goal of this course is to provide you with an overview that will help you engage the worlds of Asian religions in an informed manner for the rest of your life. During this course your understanding of what religions are will probably undergo radical transformation. For example, you will encounter the following distinctive religious ideas: that the divine possesses many different names and forms, that religions can function without a single god at the center, and that there is no permanent core to our innermost being. Over the course of the semester, you will also gain a preliminary understanding of what is involved with the study of religion in a university setting.

## You will leave this class able to begin to answer these “big questions”:

1. *What would I need to know before walking into a Hindu/Buddhist place of worship in the upper Midwest in 2021?*
2. *How have specific Asian religious traditions changed over time and space?*
3. *What can we learn from specific Asian religions about what it means to be human?*
4. *How do different Asian religions approach the nature of the divine/ the nature of reality?*

## You will fulfill the following learning outcomes:

- **GEP Humanities 1:** Read closely, think critically, and write effectively about texts or cultural artifacts that reflect on perennial questions concerning the human condition (such as the search for truth and meaning, the confrontation with suffering and mortality, or the struggle for justice, equality, and human dignity).
- **GEP Humanities 2:** Investigate and thoughtfully respond to a variety of ideas, beliefs or values held by persons in situations other than one’s own.
- **GEP Global Awareness 1:** Identify the key components found within one or more cultures that are distinct from those found in predominantly English-speaking cultures.
- **GEP Global Awareness 2:** Analyze key forces or processes that contribute to global interconnectedness, and their implications.
- **GEP Global Awareness 3:** Demonstrate curiosity and empathetic insight about diverse cultural perspectives.
- **RELIGIOUS STUDIES:** Demonstrate the ability to interpret, describe, and compare religious phenomena as they intersect with diverse historical, social, and cultural contexts.

## Assessment of learning outcomes (“How we’ll know what you learned”):

- **3-Step Worksheets** (details will be explained during course) teach you to bracket your own initial response to religious/cultural difference, identify key terms from Hinduism and Buddhism, and engage in interpretation using religious studies ideas (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 3)
- **Short Answer Questions** that will measure your understanding of specific concepts and your ability to create valid arguments supported by specific evidence. (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2 and 3, Religious Studies).
- **Unit Short Answer and Essay questions** that will ask you to construct and support with evidence an answer to a more complex question that pulls together information and concepts from across a unit. (GEP Humanities 1 and 2, GEP Global Awareness 1 and 2 and 3, Religious Studies).

## Explanation of Alignment with GEP Learning Outcomes

Religions, almost by definition, center on "perennial questions concerning the human condition" because at their root religions help people to deal with being alive (GEP Humanities 1, Religious Studies). You will learn specific Religious Studies methods for encountering, analyzing, and responding to a diverse set of religious situations (GEP Humanities 2, Religious Studies) in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the importance of placing a specific example in its specific historical, social, and cultural context (Religious Studies, GEP Global Awareness 2). Most of this course focuses on specific aspects of Asian religious traditions as they are found in specific Asian cultural contexts (Global Awareness 1), most of which are not primarily English-language environments. In each unit we have specific weeks and assignments that focus on the ways that global processes such as recent forms of colonialism and globalization shape "global interconnectedness" (Global Awareness 2). The Three-Step Method for Engaging Religion, a key part of this course, specifically teaches you a way to empathetically encounter and respond to cultural and religious difference (Global Awareness 3).

## Grading and Student Expectations

**Short Answer Questions: 15%.** These will be short (100-200 word) mini-essays due in some weeks that will ask you to apply your understanding of the week's material to a specific question.

**3-Step Worksheets: 15%.** These worksheets are based on the 3-Step Method for Engaging Religion (guidelines given before first assignment). There will be four over the course of the semester.

**Short Answer Tests (x2): 40%.** Units 1 and 2 conclude with a set of related short answer questions that are like the different parts of an essay.

**Final Essay: 20%.** The class concludes with a final essay (600-800 of your own words) that is based on the Unit 1 and 2 Short Answer Tests.

**Participation: 10%.** You must actively participate in our class at least 25 times during the semester. Active participation is defined as some combination of the following:

- Attending face-to-face class in a way that demonstrates that you have prepared the class materials.
- Participation in interactive activities (polls, discussion forum, etc.)
- Completing make-up assignments if you are absent (see absence guidelines below)
- Discussing class material with me outside of face-to-face class meetings.

At the end of the semester, you will need to submit a self-evaluation form. This form will ask you to give yourself the participation grade you feel you deserve for the semester. I will then take this self-evaluation into account when determining your participation grade. The grade will be determined according to the following scale:

**23-25 = 90-100%. 20-23 = 80-90%. 19=70%.**

If you miss more than six classes for any reason your participation grade will be a zero unless you meet with me. we determine that your absences are not impacting your ability to be successful in this class.

### **Percentage to Letter Grade Conversion**

A: 94-100, A-: 90-93, B+: 87-89, B: 83-86, B-: 80-82, C+:77-79, C: 73-76. C-: 70-72, D+: 67-69, D: 65-66, F: 64 or lower.

### **Text Rental**

You should obtain the following book from Text Rental at the bookstore:

*Anthology of World Religions: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Perspectives* by Lewis Vaughn.

***Other materials will be provided through Canvas.***

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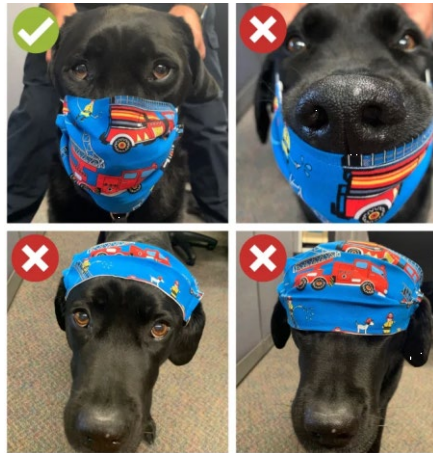
### **Inclusivity Statement**

My goal in this course is to create and maintain a learning community that feels welcoming to students from all different kinds of backgrounds and experiences. Diversity (of sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture) makes our learning better, but only if our class feels like a safe space for learning and growth. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. ***Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.***

If you have experienced a bias incident (an act of conduct, speech, or expression to which a bias motive is evident as a contributing factor regardless of whether the act is criminal) at UWSP, you have the right to report it using this [link](#). You may also contact the Dean of Students office directly at [dos@uwsp.edu](mailto:dos@uwsp.edu).

## COVID-Related Policies

UWSP is committed to offering students a face-to-face learning environment that is as safe as possible. Here is how we'll handle face-to-face classes unless the university decides to change COVID-related policy. For our class to meet together, everyone needs to sit in their assigned seat (for contact tracing). Everyone needs to wear their masks ***properly*** or we cannot meet face-to-face.



The only exception to this rule is if you have a mask exemption that has been granted to you directly from the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (DATC). If this is the case, you and I will both know because we will have received official notification from the DATC. All of the above guidelines have been set by the University and are not subject to my individual discretion.

## Class Absences

It is inevitable that this is going to be a complicated semester. I am always ready to help you succeed in this class. If you miss class for a COVID-related reason (sickness, quarantine, isolation), or for any other acceptable reason<sup>1</sup> then you'll need to follow these steps in order to count that class towards your participation grade:

**Step 1:** Complete all of the assigned reading for the day(s) you missed.

**Step 2:** Review the in-class materials from the day(s) you missed (audio recordings, PowerPoint lectures, films, etc.).

**Step 3:** Review notes from someone in your group.

**Step 4:** Have a look at the written assignment for the week and see if you feel able to complete the assignment properly.

**Step 5:** Write a brief 1-2 paragraph summary of what you feel were the important concepts and details from each class, along with any questions or confusions that you have.

**Step 6 (OPTIONAL):** If necessary, request a Zoom meeting with me to go through your questions.

If you have an unexcused absence, then I would ask that you do steps 1-4 before requesting a meeting. I am also ready to give you flexibility on assignment deadlines if you need it.

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<sup>1</sup> \*The following are acceptable reasons for absence from class: illness, family emergency, or a school or team related event. Best practice for excused absences is send an email to [lwhitmor@uwsp.edu](mailto:lwhitmor@uwsp.edu) prior to the absence requesting that it be excused.

## **Policies and Resources**

### **Assignment Submission and Late Work Policy**

All assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Canvas unless otherwise instructed. Assignments must be submitted by the given deadline or special permission must be requested *before the due date*. Without instructor permission, late or missing assignments may affect the student's grade. I am always ready to work with students who are struggling.

### **Student Support**

UWSP offers students support in many different ways: technology, study skills, subject-specific tutoring, counseling, and medical services. There is a special section of our Canvas course with links to all of the ways that the university is ready to help you.

### **Religious Beliefs Accommodation**

It is UW System policy ([UWS 22](#)) to reasonably accommodate your sincerely held religious beliefs with respect to all examinations and other academic requirements.

### **Equal Access for Students with Disabilities**

If modifications are required due to a disability, please inform the instructor and contact the [Disability and Assistive Technology Center](#) to complete an Accommodations Request form. Phone: 346-3365 or Room 609 Albertson Hall.

### **Title IX**

UW-Stevens Point is committed to fostering a safe, productive learning environment. Title IX and institutional policy prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In the event that you choose to disclose information about having survived sexual violence, including harassment, rape, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and specify that this violence occurred while a student at UWSP, federal and state laws mandate that I, as your instructor, notify the Title IX Coordinator/Office of the Dean of Students. Please see the information on the [Dean of Students webpage](#) for information on making confidential reports of misconduct or interpersonal violence, as well as campus and community resources available to students. For more information see the [Title IX page](#).

### **Academic Misconduct**

Copying off of someone's test, plagiarism, claiming credit for work that is not yours, and all other forms of academic misconduct are not tolerated at UW-Stevens Point. If a student is confused about what exactly academic misconduct is, there is information available regarding rules and procedures for the [process](#). You can also visit with your faculty or learn how to cite the work of others at the [Writing Lab](#).

### **Emergency Procedures**

See UW-Stevens Point Emergency Procedures at [www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures](http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures) for details on all emergency response at UW-Stevens Point."

## **FERPA**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) provides students with a right to protect, review, and correct their student records.

Lecture materials and recordings for Rel 100 Fall 2021 are protected intellectual property at UW-Stevens Point. Students in this course may use the materials and recordings for their personal use related to participation in this class. If a lecture is not already recorded, you are not authorized to record my lectures without my permission unless you are considered by the university to be a qualified student with a disability requiring accommodation. [Regent Policy Document 4-1] Students may not copy or share lecture materials and recordings outside of class, including posting on internet sites or selling to commercial entities. Unauthorized use of these copyrighted lecture materials and recordings constitutes copyright infringement and may be addressed under the university's policies, UWS Chapters 14 and 17, governing student academic and non-academic misconduct.

## Schedule of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted on Canvas. If assigned material is not from *Anthology of World Religions* (VAUGHN) or linked directly from this page then you will find it on Canvas. You need to be able to refer to assigned materials in class. That means either bringing a laptop/tablet to class or if necessary printing readings out.

### Week 1: How do we study "religions" connected to Asia?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Turn in your "About Me" by Friday, September 3 at midnight.

Thursday, September 2: WELCOME!

### Week 2: How does "religion" connect to everyday Hindu practices and rituals?

**ASSIGNMENT:** First short answer question due on CANVAS by Friday, September 10 at midnight.

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

- In *The Anthology of World Religions* (henceforth VAUGHN) read p. 3-7 (First Look, Religious Questions and Answers, Studying Religions)
- From Harvard University's Pluralism Project, read "[What Does Hindu Mean?](#)"
- [View Sakthi Puja in Brookfield.](#)

Thursday, September 9, 2021

- In VAUGHN read "Domestic Worship" by Narayanan (124-125).
- Read the following selections (PDF on Canvas) from *Everyday Hinduism* by Joyce Flueckiger: "Bhakti" and "Families of Deities and the God Vishnu."

### Week 3: How do puja and bhakti fit into "everyday" Hinduisms? How do the historical origins of "Hinduism" connect to Hindu life and practice today?

**ASSIGNMENT:** First 3-Step Worksheet due on CANVAS by Friday, September 17 at midnight.

Tuesday, September 14, 2021

- Read the following selections (PDF on Canvas) from *Everyday Hinduism* by Joyce Flueckiger: "Puja" and "Shiva and Devi."
- See how *bhakti* can be expressed through dance by viewing [this dance-prayer to Shiva.](#)

Thursday, September 16, 2021

- VAUGHN: "A Prayer to the God Agni" (p. 102-103).
- From The Pluralism Project read [Agni: The Fire Altar](#) and [Veda: The Scripture and Authority.](#)

### Week 4: How do the historical origins of "Hinduism" connect to Hindu life and practice today? How do famous Hindu stories and scriptures illustrate concepts of dharma?

**ASSIGNMENT:** Second 3-Step Worksheet due on CANVAS by Friday, September 24 at midnight.

Tuesday, September 21, 2021

- VAUGHN read "Brihadaranyaka Upanishad" (p. 102); "That art Thou" (p. 109), "Yoga: Discipline of Freedom" (p. 119).
- *The Conversation* read "[Can Yoga Be Christian?](#)"

Thursday, September 23, 2021

- From *The Pluralism Project*, read about [Rama, Sita, and Hanuman.](#)
- From the University of Michigan library's online *Ramayana* exhibit, read the following:
  - [Introduction to The Career of Rama; The Story; A True Hero; Wives of Kosala; Loyal Allies; Rama's Enemies; Divine Power](#)

- Read "A Note on Caste" by Joyce Flueckiger (PDF on Canvas) and "Dharma: Context and Multiplicity (PDF on Canvas)
- Check out this mini-documentary about ["The Casteless Collective."](#)



## **Week 5: How do famous Hindu stories and scriptures illustrate concepts of dharma? How does the past shape Hinduism today?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Short answer question due on CANVAS by Friday, October 1 at midnight.**

Tuesday, September 28

- From VAUGHN, read "Selections from the Bhagavad Gita" (105-108), "Bhakti Yoga" (122-123).
- Read this [summary explanation of the Bhagavad Gita from the UCLA Manas project](#).
- From the modern graphic novel and film version of *The Bhagavad Gita*, view "[Blood Rain](#)" and "[Arjuna Hesitates.](#)"

Thursday, September 30

- Read and analyze the timeline for the history of Hinduism found on the [main page for the Pluralism Project's Hinduism section](#). To see the timeline scroll to the bottom of the page. For today start at the beginning of the timeline and read through "Caitanya."
- From the Pluralism Project read "[A Context for Diversity.](#)"
- Read a short essay about Islam and South Asia from the Asia Society (link to essay on CANVAS).
- Check out [The Islamic Shrine Where Hindus Pray](#).

## **Week 6: How does the past shape Hinduism today?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Short answer question due on CANVAS by Friday, October 8 at midnight.**

Tuesday, October 5

- Read and analyze the timeline for the history of Hinduism found on the [main page for the Pluralism Project's Hinduism section](#). To see the timeline scroll to the bottom of the page, and for today finish the timeline.
- View [How the British Stole 45 Trillion Dollars from India with Trains](#).
- Read "[The Road to India's Partition](#)" from *The Conversation*.

Thursday, October 7

- Read an excerpt about *globalization* from "a globalizing world? culture, economics, politics" (edited by David Held, PDF on CANVAS).
- Read [How Americans Came to Embrace Meditation, and with it, Hinduism](#).

## **Week 7: How do Hindu perspectives on Black Lives Matter illustrate the effects of globalization?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Unit 1 Short Answer Test due on the following Tuesday, October 19 by the beginning of class (11:00 for Section 1, 2:00 for Section 2).**

Tuesday, October 12

- [A Pandit's Reflection on Protest, Ahimsa, and Black Lives Matter](#)
- [All Lives Matter](#)
- [Hindu Students Council Statement on the Murder of George Floyd](#)
- [Hindu American Foundation: Dharma and Racial Justice](#)
- [Black Lives Matter and So Do Dalit, Adivasi, and Muslim Lives](#)

**Thursday, October 14: FLEX DAY**

**Week 8: How do pre-existing ideas we have about Buddhism compare to different Buddhist relationships to the Buddha? What do Buddhist teachings think is the key to happiness and freedom?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Unit 1 Short Answer Test due Tuesday, October 19 by the beginning of class (11:00 for Section 1, 2:00 for Section 2).**

**NO SHORT ANSWER THIS WEEK.**

Tuesday, October 19

**OPTIONAL:**

- [The Path of Awakening](#)
- [Prince Siddhartha: Renouncing the World](#)
- [Becoming the "Buddha": The Way of Meditation](#)

Thursday, October 21

- [Buddha's Birthday](#)
- In Vaughn read "The Awakened One" (p. 168-169).
- Read a brief overview of how the beginnings of Buddhism connect to Hinduism and Jainism (link to essay on Canvas).
- From The Pluralism Project: [The Dharma: The Teachings of the Buddha](#) (be sure to LISTEN to the additional content on the bottom of the page).
- "The Buddha in His Time and Ours" by Charles Hallisey. [PDF on Canvas](#).

**Week 9: What do Buddhist teachings think is the key to happiness and freedom? What makes a community "Buddhist"? What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice (Part 1)?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Short answer question due on CANVAS by Friday, October 29 at midnight.**

Tuesday, October 26

- "When Things Fall Apart" by Pema Chodron (see Vaughn p. 194-197)
- [The Practice of Mindfulness](#)
- Interbeing by Thich Nhat Hanh. [PDF on Canvas](#).

Thursday, October 28

- [The Pluralism Project: Sangha](#)
- [The Pluralism Project: The Three Treasures](#)
- VAUGHN: The Five Precepts p. 169-171
- [Pluralism Project: The Expansion of Buddhism](#)
- Explore the timeline of the history of Buddhism [found at the bottom of the main Pluralism Project Buddhism page](#).

**Week 10: What makes a community "Buddhist"? What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice? Part 2.**

**ASSIGNMENT: 3-Step worksheet due on Canvas by Friday, November 5.**

Tuesday, November 2

- [Theravada: Way of the Elders](#)
- [The Practice of Mindfulness](#)
- [Kathina Ceremonies in Rural Thailand](#)
- Explore [this site about the main scripture of Theravada Buddhism: the Tipitaka](#).

Thursday, November 4

- [Becoming a Monk](#)
- [From Street Gangs to Temple](#)
- VAUGHN: Women in Buddhism (p. 204-205).
- [The Perfect Generosity of Prince Vessantara](#)

**Week 11: What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice? Part 3.**

**ASSIGNMENT: Short Answer due on Canvas by Friday, November 12.**

Tuesday, November 9

- [Mahayana: The Great Vehicle](#)
- [Chanting The Sutras](#)
- [Building a Pure Land on Earth](#)
- [Devotion to Guanyin](#)
- [Difference between Theravada and Mahayana](#)

Thursday, November 11

- [Monastery in the Hudson Valley](#)
- [Celebrating the New Year](#)
- Vaughn: No Need for Precepts (p. 191-192), The Koan Exercise (192-194)
- Finish watching *To the Land of Bliss*. [Link to film on Canvas.](#)

**Week 12: What are the most common and important forms of Buddhist community and practice (Part 4)? Why do people think most Buddhists meditate?**

**ASSIGNMENT: 3-Step Worksheet due on CANVAS by Friday, November 19 at midnight.**

Tuesday, November 16

- [Vajrayana: The Diamond Vehicle](#)
- [Creating a Mandala](#)
- In VAUGHN: "Freedom in Exile: The Dalai Lama (p.198-200); "Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism" by Chogyam Trungpa (p.182-186).

Thursday, November 18

- [How do Buddhists handle the coronavirus? The answer is not just meditation.](#)
- [The Problem with Mindfulness](#)
- Read a [short essay on Healing Rituals](#) by Pierre Salguero and view the short film on the same [web page Annual Medicine Buddha Ceremony at Minh Dang Quang](#). This film is the subject for our last 3-step worksheet.

**Week 13: Why do people think most Buddhists meditate? Why do some people think most Buddhists are peaceful?**

**ASSIGNMENT: Unit 2 Short Answer Test due on Tuesday, November 30 at by the beginning of class. (11:00 for Section 1, 2:00 for Section 2).**

Tuesday, November 23

- "Why are we so surprised when Buddhists are violent?" [PDF on Canvas.](#)

**Thursday, November 25: THANKSGIVING**

**Week 14: Where can we see the impact of globalization and colonialism on Asian religions in the United States? Part 1.**

**ASSIGNMENT: Unit 2 Short Answer Essays due on Tuesday, November 30 by the beginning of class.**

Tuesday, November 30: **FLEX DAY.** We may discuss how to prepare for the final essay and also might collectively choose one or two final topics connected to Asian religions that have not been covered yet in class.

Thursday, December 2

- TBD. Preparation for Final Essay.

**Week 15: Where can we see the impact of globalization and colonialism on Asian religions in the United States? Part 2.**

Tuesday, December 7

- TBD. Preparation for Final Essay.

Thursday, December 9

- Closing Conversations.

The Final Essay for BOTH sections of Rel 100 is due on Canvas by no later than Thursday, December 16 at 12:15 PM.